The Gothic Revival style had eighteenth century roots, but became popular in America in the 1840s-1850s. It was championed by architects such as Andrew Jackson Downing, who promoted it extensively in books such as Cottage Residences (1842), and Lewis Allen, in his various editions of Rural Architecture (see Figure 44). Elaborate buildings in the Gothic style showcase decorative elements inspired by medieval period architecture, such as cinquefoil or casement windows with leaded glass or pointed arches (Figure 144). The building's shape changes as well. While highly ornamental Gothic Revival houses like the Levi J. Smith house exist in the survey area (Figure 42), the Gothic silhouette is distinctive enough for it to be evoked through the use of only a few elements. Think of the steep gable, board-and-batten siding, and arched window in Grant Wood's American Gothic, for example (Figure 41).[22] Board-and-batten exterior siding alone is sometimes the only notable allusion a house might have to the style. Compare Lewis Allen's simplest cottage on the left side of Figure 44 with the small house at WS 316 (Figure 129) or the tenant house at MN 650 (Figure 23).

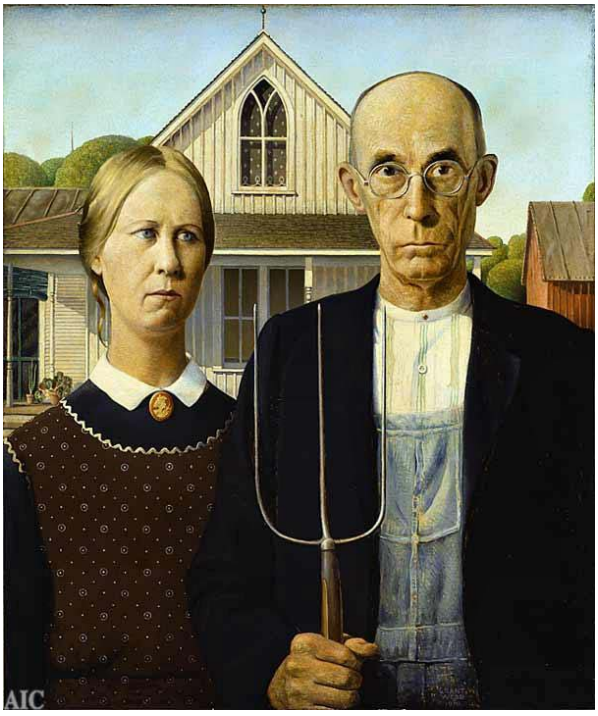

Figure 41: *Grant Wood: American Gothic, 1930 (Art Institute of Chicago). The house still stands, in Eldon, Iowa.*

[22] It's also notable in that painting that the barn in the background visible behind the man's shoulder has the same board-and batten siding treatment as the house. Wood had a keen eye for American vernacular architecture.

Characteristics of the Gothic Revival style may include Gothic arched windows like the one in Wood's painting, where the two arc meet in a point rather than being entirely round. Other details include decorative gable verge boards, or even crenellated parapet walls to suggest a castle. Very elaborate examples often have a wedding cake-like application of ornamental trim at all openings and edges, as at WS 45, the Smith house (Figure 42). This enthusiasm for applied ornamentation grows in the nineteenth century as such elements become increasingly mass-produced.

Figure 42: *WS 45, Levi J. Smith House, before 1872, Springfield vicinity (National Register photograph, Joe DeSpain, KHC, 1983).*

The elaborate examples are more the exception than the rule in the survey area. More often, we see the influence of the Gothic style where one or more peaked cross gables project from the roof of a highly-pitched side-gable house. Some of these houses have additional Gothic stylistic elements such as board and batten siding, but the gables alone are the sole "Gothic" element of many. Several are embellished with elements that are not Gothic in style, such as Italianate brackets under the eaves, or Queen Anne style porches with turned wood columns and spindle work brackets, as at MN 683 (Figure 43). Just twenty-five buildings in the survey area were identified as Gothic, but the style has a deeper impact on the landscape than that number seems to suggest. For this reason we will explore the Gothic style as a case study of how a national style impacts the resources of the survey area.

Figure 43: *MN 683, Near Jones Creek, detail. See also Figure 45, Figure 46, and Figure 47.*

Although Gothic style buildings seem quaint to us today, there is every reason to think that they were seen as progressive and modern historically. The fact that we find a number of quite small

houses associated with the style, such as MN 650 (Figure 23), WS 398 (Figure 48) or WS 316 (Figure 129) is probably not accidental. The period literature found the Gothic style to be as appropriate for tenant houses and laborer's cottages as it was for mansions (Figure 129). Unlike most earlier architectural pattern books, those that promoted the Gothic style were strongly reformist in nature and allied with progressive movements such as domestic reform. Housing for workers should not only be stylish and attractive, but also comfortable. As A. J. Downing wrote in his preface to the Architecture of Country Houses (1859):

> … a good house (and by this I mean a fitting, tasteful, and significant dwelling) is a powerful means of civilization. A nation, whose rural population is content to live in mean huts and miserable hovels, is certain to be behind its neighbors in education, the arts, and all that makes up the external signs of progress. With the perception of proportion, symmetry, order and beauty, awakens the desire for possession, and with them comes that refinement of manners which distinguishes a civilized from a coarse and brutal people. So long as men are forced to dwell in log huts and follow a hunter's life, we must not be surprised at lynch law and the use of the bowie knife. But, when smiling lawns and tasteful cottages begin to embellish a country, we know that order and culture are established.[23]

The styles he promoted, chiefly Gothic and Italianate, were seen as a means toward the end of establishing a more civil society. His houses covered the spectrum of society so that even the tenant or laborer's cottage could be a stylish dwelling. Similarly, Lewis F Allen provided designs (Figure 44) for small cottages suitable for farm tenants:

> Altogether too little attention has been paid in our country to these most useful appendages to the farm, both in their construction and appearance. Nothing adds more to the feeling of comfort, convenience, and *home* expression in the farm, than the snug-built laborers' cottage upon it. The cottage also gives the farm an air of respectability and dignity. The laborer should, if not so sumptuously, be as comfortably housed and sheltered as his employer. This is quite as much to the interest of such employer as it is beneficial to the health and happiness of the laborer. Building is so cheap in America, that the difference in cost between a snugly-finished cottage, and a rickety, open tenement, is hardly to be taken into consideration, as compared with the higher health, and increased enjoyment of the laborer and his family; while every considerate employer knows that cheerfulness and contentment of disposition, which are perhaps more promoted by good home accommodations for the workingman than by any other influence, are strong incentives to increased labor on his part, and more fidelity in its application.[24]

As mentioned above, one of the most common manifestations of the Gothic style in the RHDI region is in houses with steep gable roof with steep cross gables or dormers to create a distinctive overall appearance. The details themselves such as bargeboard, siding, porches, windows, etc,

---

[23] A. J. Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses, Including Designs for Cottages, Farm-Houses, and Villas…, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1859), v.
[24] Lewis F. Allen, Rural Architecture (New York: C. M. Saxton, 1852) 208.

may conform to or depart from strict Gothic style in many ways, but for the purposes of this discussion we will call them Gothic cross-gable houses. We will also see examples on barns and outbuildings.

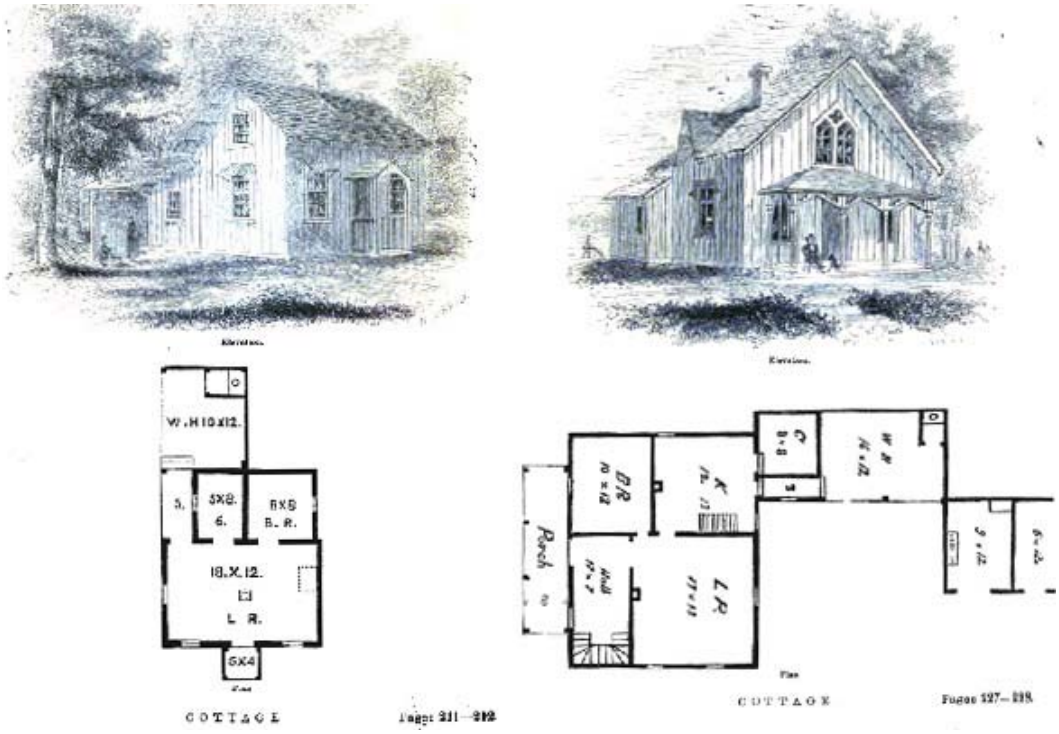

Figure 44: *Plans for cottages from Lewis F. Allen, Rural Architecture, Being a Complete Description of Farm Houses, Cottages and Outbuildings… (New York: C.M. Saxton, 1852).*

Gothic cross-gable houses are fairly common throughout rural Kentucky and Washington and Marion counties are no exceptions. At its most basic, the Gothic vernacular cottage, farm house, or town house is one to two stories tall, a single room deep, and two or more rooms wide with one, two, or three steeply-peaked cross gables or dormers. More often than not, the main part of the house is augmented with shed or ell appendages stretching behind. Minus the front gables they have same basic forms as many of the non-Gothic contemporary examples nearby, whatever their style might be. When plans with more complex footprints (such as T-plans or other asymmetrical arrangements of rooms) become popular in the later nineteenth century, the Gothic gables continue to be popular. In those cases, the gables meld easily with Colonial styling and invoke something of the feeling of an early New England house. This later manifestation of Gothic is sometimes called "Victorian Gothic" to differentiate it from the Gothic Revival.

Figure 45: *MN 683, Balloon frame single cross gable Gothic/eclectic style house, 1860s-1870s, Bradfordsville/Gravel Switch vicinity. See also Figure 43, Figure 46, and Figure 47.*

Single Gable

MN 683 (Figure 45) is an excellent single cross-gable example, located near Jones Creek, near Bradfordsville. It is a three-bay I-house with a narrow vestibule entry rather than a center hall, flanked by two rooms, with an ell stretching out behind the main body of the house. The tall, narrow cross gable identifies with the Gothic style, but the brackets in the gable and the tall windows reflect the Italianate Style. The two front rooms share a central hearth situated behind the front vestibule. The trim inside is more Greek revival in flavor than Gothic, the mantles having wide, flat surfaces rather than angular pointed moldings. The room to the left of the front entry is the less elaborate of the two main rooms and, from there, a door to the left of the hearth opens to a winder stair. The stair leads to a room above which has no access to the rest of the second story - a private bedroom chamber. The room to the right of the front entry has a showier mantle with a Cupid's bow arch poised above the coal grate. A smaller urban example, the Mudd House, or WS 938, in Briartown (see Figure 48: compare it to Allen's Cottage on the left in Figure 44), outside of Springfield, is either a one or two room plan with a shed room behind the main body of the house, two stories tall, with the single and central cross-gable dormer framing the lone second story front window as the single nod to Gothic. The peaked cross gable very effectively gives this small house a sense of scale and presence.

Figure 46: *MN 683, Interior of left hand room, showing Greek style mantle & door surround. See also Figure 43, Figure 45, and Figure 47.*

Figure 47: *MN 683, Greek style mantle in right hand room. See also Figure 43, Figure 45, and Figure 46.*

Figure 48: *WS 938, Mudd House, late nineteenth-early twentieth century, Briartown.*

More examples of single cross-gable houses are shown in Figure 49 - Figure 53, all examples with a pair of interior chimneys much like the Smith house in Figure 42, where the hearths heat the rooms on either side of a center stair hall. A total of thirteen single gable houses were documented. Although their floor plans vary, all of the documented examples in the regions save two had a single central doorway. The exceptions, WS 496 and WS 253 have single off-center doors. The Glasscock house, MN 688 (Figure 53) is largely a mix of Italianate and Greek Revival with some Federal details in styling (see details at Figure 77 and Figure 80). The ell of the house, visible in the side view (Figure 54), is of interest in that it shows an additional cross gable. This façade of the ell forms a sort of secondary front of the building and the cross gable is centered along the ell itself exclusive of the main body of the house, almost like another center gable house has been attached to the back of the main house.

An excellent example of a single cross gable form in a Gothic styled outbuilding is found in the stock barn at WS 33 (see Figure 262), an English type barn. The cross gable provides a convenient space for a hay door to the loft of the building. Another outbuilding, this time a meat house (see WS 849, Figure 207) has its steep, projecting forward gable embellished with scalloped bargeboard and completes the Gothic stylistic effect with board and batten siding.

Figure 49: *MN 684, Taylor/Rawlings house, late nineteenth century, Gravel Switch vicinity.*

Figure 50: *MN 682, Glasscock house, late nineteenth century, Rolling Fork. The front of the house faces the waterway.*

Figure 51: *MN 674, late nineteenth century, Gravel Switch.*

Figure 52: *WS 1114, late nineteenth century, Willisburg*

Figure 53: *MN 688, Glasscock house, mid nineteenth century, Beech Grove vicinity. See also Figure 54, Figure 77, and Figure 80.*

Figure 54: *MN 688, side view. See also Figure 53, Figure 77, and Figure 80*

Two Gables

Double cross gable examples are also common in the two-county area, usually appearing in two-story medium size houses with double pen or center hall plans. WS 523 (Figure 55) has a center hall plan and interior chimneys serving two rooms flanking the hall, just like the single gable houses mentioned above. Here, though, the second floor bedrooms, rather than the upstairs stair hall, enjoy the additional light and space afforded by the dormers. The house has some elements of Colonial, Queen Anne, and Italianate styles. Service rooms are in a shed that runs the full length of the back of the house. WS 852 (Figure 57 and Figure 56), near Hardesty in Washington County is another example, with windows in the tall, narrow aspect ratio of the Italianate style, the gables sheathed in a chevron pattern echoing shingle or stick style, the porch basically Queen Anne, Eastlake, or most simply, "Victorian." Otherwise, the form of the house is remarkably similar to that of MN 683 (discussed above, Figure 45), a lobby entry, central chimney, three bay, and two equal sized front rooms.

Eighteen two-gable examples were documented, and they can be divided into three major types. One house alone, WS 869 (Figure 59), has an asymmetrical two-bay door/window arrangement on the first floor, suggesting a possible side passage or hall/parlor plan. Nine examples are two-door, double pen plan houses, a type discussed in some detail below in the section on house plans. These are characterized by a 4-bay fenestration on the first floor, window/door/ door/window, as at MN 911 (Figure 63), MS 190 (Figure 62) and WS 1115 (Figure 64). Seven

examples have a three-bay façade with a central door as we saw in most of the single gable examples. The other two could not be determined: WS 897 has an off-center door, but probably had two central doors, with one of them covered over with the later aluminum siding, while the front of WS 993 is obscured by a later addition.

Figure 55: *WS 523, frame two-gable Gothic house, center passage plan, late nineteenth century, Mackville vicinity.*

Figure 56: *WS 852, detail of porch. Frame two-gable double pen house, late nineteenth century, Hardesty vicinity. See also Figure 57.*

Figure 57: *WS 852, Detail of cross gable. See also Figure 56.*

Figure 58: *WS 730, late nineteenth-early twentieth century, Litsey/Poortown.*

Figure 59: *WS 869, late nineteenth-early twentieth century, Springfield vicinity.*

Figure 60: *WS 782, early twentieth century, Mackville.*

Figure 61: *WS 295, early twentieth century, Booker vicinity.*

Figure 62: *MN 190, early twentieth century, Holy Cross vicinity.*

Figure 63: *MN 911, early twentieth century, Greenbriar vicinity.*

Figure 64: *WS 1115, early twentieth century, Willisburg.*

Three Gables

Larger Gothic houses sometimes have three front gables for maximum effect. Five examples were documented in the region. WS 718, the Cocanaugher house (Figure 65), is an excellent example, a center hall plan house with unusually elaborate turned and sawn embellishments on the porch and the gables, and another projecting gable along the long ell side of the house. The ornament really alludes more to other prevalent styles of the period, stick or spindle style, Queen

Anne, and even some elements of Italianate in the porch cornice. Again, the major element of Gothic style is the use of gables to create a distinctive roof line. We see even less influence of the Gothic in the three gable house at MN 552 (Figure 66) where Italianate, Greek Revival, and perhaps Colonial Revival details are much in evidence. Other three-gable houses are shown in Figure 31, Figure 67, and Figure 68

Figure 65: *WS 718, Cocanaugher house, late twentieth century, Texas vicinity.*

Figure 66: *MN 552, Cecil house, late nineteenth century, St. Mary vicinity.*

Figure 67: *WS 885, Davis house, late nineteenth century, Willisburg vicinity*

Figure 68: *WS 648, Hatchett/Peters house, early twentieth century, Mackville.*

Asymmetrical Massing

In eight cases, we found steep cross gables on houses in a T-plan or other asymmetrical arrangement, as at WS 780 (Figure 69). The asymmetrical forms are commonly associated with the Queen Anne style in Kentucky, although asymmetry is common in high style Gothic houses. Other examples from the survey are seen at WS 49 (Figure 70), Ws 640 (Figure 71), and WS 247 (Figure 72). WS 247, although in poor condition, is an interesting example because it began as a standard two gable, double door form. The wing to the left in Figure 72 was added on later, closely mimicking the style and detailing of the original. Although it looks the same, the construction is quite a bit different, as is apparent in the attic (Figure 73).

Figure 69: *WS 780, Haydon house, late nineteenth century, Mackville.*

Figure 70: *WS 490, late nineteenth-early twentieth century, Mackville.*

Figure 71: *WS 640, late nineteenth century, Mackville.*

Figure 72: *WS 247, late nineteenth century, Willisburg vicinity. See also Figure 73.*

Figure 73: *WS 247, Detail of attic framing in wing where it joins the main body of the house. The original house is vertical plank frame, the addition is light balloon frame. See also Figure 72.*